

# How to Care for Your Garden Tools

[Home](#) [What We Do](#) >> [Gardening Tips & Tools](#) > [How to](#)



Using well-maintained quality gardening tools will make all the difference in your gardening endeavours. Whether you can set aside a few moments at the end of your gardening day, season or year, you'll enjoy the benefits of clean, sharp tools.

## WHY REGULAR MAINTENANCE IS NEEDED

In a perfect garden shed, tools would be cleaned and respectfully stored following each use, but life gets busy and the after-use care slips by the way side. Regular cleaning, annual maintenance and good storage practices, however, will prevent your tools from developing rust and dull blades, in turn making them last longer and much easier to use. Frequent cleaning also helps control the spread of disease and pests in your gardens which can adhere to the implements.

## REGULAR CLEANING PRACTICES

The easiest way to care for your tools throughout the growing season is to set up a pail of sand impregnated with vegetable oil to plunge sharp-edged tools in after each use. Repeating this a few times will remove most dirt and

debris, lightly sharpen your tools and coat them with oil all at the same time.

Alternatively, spray your tools clean with a garden hose, or buff them down using a stiff bristled brush or steel wool. To remove stubborn substances like sap, rubbing just a few drops of pure essential oil of lemon will do wonders. Otherwise, use warm soapy water and a cloth. Allow the tools to dry, then wipe down any metal parts with an oily cloth.

The frequency with which you clean your tools is up to you; however, the more often your tools are cleaned, the longer they will last. Many gardeners agree that good-quality tools can last a lifetime if they are well looked after.

Before storing for your implements for winter, give them some extra care so they will not deteriorate and are ready for spring use. Clean them off as you normally would and then be sure to

- Remove any rust with steel wool.
- Keep tools sharp, check blades for any nicks and sharpen them using a file or a whetstone. You can get this done at a hardware store, which is recommended for tools that are trickier to sharpen, such as secateurs (aka hand pruners or pruning shears) or anything with a double blade.
- Tighten any loose screws on tools like shears and loppers and lubricate them if necessary.
- Protect metal from rust by coating it in vegetable oil using a cloth.
- Inspect wooden tool handles and sand away any splinters. Purchase boiled linseed oil (do not use raw linseed oil) to coat wooden handles to prevent them from splitting. Alternatively, apply a pure beeswax polish and allow the tool to sit for a few hours before you buff it.
- Extend your steel wheelbarrow's life by using a non-toxic oil-based paint to coat and protect it.
- Check garden hoses for leaks and repair if possible. Empty the hoses of any water, then coil them for storage so they do not get crimped or crushed.

To keep your motor-powered garden gadgets—including lawn mowers, hedge trimmers and weed eaters—in top shape, be sure to check the original manuals for maintenance tips and schedules. In general, you'll want to

- Check that blades are nick-free and sharp; replace or sharpen as needed.
- Keep blades clean so they don't rust.
- Free blades of grass and debris by wiping them down or using a leaf-blower or air compressor.
- For lawn mowers, change or clean the air filter once or twice a year.
- Inspect, clean or replace spark plugs on mowers.
- Check all electrical cords for damage.
- Check all bolts and nuts for tightness.
- Drain and refill oil reservoirs once or twice a year.
- Coil any electrical cords and store to protect them from damage.
- Empty gas tanks in the fall.
- Keep blades oiled for winter storage.

## PROPER STORAGE

The best way to store most tools is to hang them on the wall in a watertight toolshed or garage. Tools suspended on a wall experience less wear than stacked tools, extending their use. Hanging tools also keeps them out of the way, leaving your work area safe (they can be sharp) and tidy. When storing for winter, avoid leaving the metal end on a concrete floor, as this is conducive to rusting.